

## **Australian Country Report – Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting (MAR) on the implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action**

### **Introduction**

The following paper details Australia's efforts to monitor, assess and report on its progress in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Specifically, the paper describes:

- how and why Australia prepared a summary of the proposals for action developed through the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF); and
- how this summary was used to conduct an assessment of national progress in relation to implementing the proposals for action.

The paper also provides some insight into the key lessons learned from undertaking these tasks.

### **Background**

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development has facilitated extensive deliberations on actions needed to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) met four times between 1995 and 1997. It was mandated to pursue consensus and formulate options for further actions to combat deforestation and forest degradation, and to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The IPF's final report<sup>1</sup> contained more than 150 proposals for action.

The Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) met four times between 1997 and 2000. It was mandated to facilitate the implementation of the IPF proposals for action and to further the policy dialogue on a number of issues left pending from the IPF process. The IFF's final report<sup>2</sup> contained more than 120 additional proposals for action.

At its first substantive session in June 2001, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 1) recognised that monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) were among the principal functions of the UNFF and were complementary to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, as well as related to the overall review of the Forum.

UNFF 1 decided that the Forum's function on monitoring, assessment and reporting comprise the following areas:

- (a) Progress on implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action;
- (b) Progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests; and
- (c) Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

In recognition of the importance of MAR to the future work of the UNFF, the governments of Australia, Brazil, Ghana, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Norway and the United States of America, in collaboration with the UNFF Secretariat and member organisations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) including CIFOR, FAO, ITTO and UNDP, agreed to convene a country-led initiative in support of the UNFF.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, March 1997 (E/CN.17/1997/12)

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, March 2000 (E/CN.17/2000/14)

The initiative is entitled “*International Expert Meeting on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting on the Progress towards Sustainable Forest Management*”.

This expert meeting will provide a forum for exploring the extent to which existing criteria and indicators (C&I) can be used for MAR on the progress towards sustainable forest management within the context of the UNFF. More importantly, the meeting will provide an opportunity to exchange views and experiences on how countries can monitor, assess and report progress on implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action. From Australia’s perspective, national monitoring, assessment and reporting of progress in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action will be key in reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

### **Forest management in Australia**

Under the Australian Constitution, State and Territory governments have primary responsibility for forest management decision-making. Through Acts of Parliament and government policy, State and Territory governments establish the framework for management of public and private forests. These governments are also directly responsible for the management of large areas of public forest through various agencies.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for ensuring that Australia’s international obligations are met and that provisions of Commonwealth legislation are satisfied. The Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory governments are all signatories to the 1992 National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS). The NFPS provides the framework within which the governments can achieve cooperatively their vision for sustainable management of Australia’s forests and ensure the community obtains a balanced return from all forest uses.

A key element of the approach adopted in the NFPS involves Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) between the Commonwealth and State governments. RFAs cover eleven regions in four States where commercial timber production is a major forest use.

RFAs are based on scientific, comprehensive regional assessments of forest values and uses, and on consultation with stakeholders. The RFA process has greatly added to our knowledge of the many values of Australia’s forests. The twenty-year agreements seek to provide a balance of the full suite of environmental, social, economic and heritage values that forests can provide for current and future generations.

RFAs establish a forest conservation reserve system that is comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR), and a system of complimentary sustainable forest management outside reserves. The CAR reserve system is based on nationally agreed criteria for the protection of biodiversity, old growth and wilderness.

While the NFPS did not focus on woodlands, many of its goals are applicable to them. A number of government initiatives, such as the Natural Heritage Trust and farm forestry, address areas outside the focus of the Statement.

### **Summarising the IPF/IFF proposals for action**

#### *Overview*

In the six years from 1995-2000, the IPF and IFF processes generated over 270 proposals for action. In 1998, Australia prepared a simplified summary of the 153 proposals for action arising from the IPF process. The summary’s aim was to assist

national stakeholders improve their understanding of the scope and intent of the IPF proposals for action. This summary was later incorporated into the IPF Practitioners Guide prepared by the 'Six Country Initiative'<sup>3</sup> to support the implementation of the IPF proposals for action.

Building on this work, in 2000, by considering the additional proposals for action agreed to during the IFF process, Australia prepared a comprehensive summary of the 270 plus proposals for action agreed to during both the IPF and IFF process. This summary was titled, *The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests Summary of Proposals for Action – A tool to assist countries to measure progress and establish priorities for sustainable forest management* (the summary booklet). The following discussion focuses on the process and tasks involved in its preparation.

The summary was prepared using the following principles:

- capture the important aspects or intent of each proposals for action;
- group similar or related actions into one 'summarised proposal for action';
- separate large complex actions into meaningful components;
- avoid duplication of any action unless the action is directed at different parties;
- incorporate some IPF and IFF program headings and actions into other related thematic headings;
- incorporate all related thematic headings into one of four major categories: implementation within countries; international cooperation; trade and environment; and work of international organisations; and
- group all related summarised proposals for actions under the most relevant heading.

The summary booklet provides a guide to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. It is not intended to replace the detailed negotiated text. For this reason, the tables in the booklet are presented so that each summarised proposal for action is cross referenced to the relevant paragraphs of the IPF and IFF reports that contain the full text of the agreed proposals for action.

#### *Summarisation Process and Tasks*

The IPF/IFF proposals for action are expressed in complex, negotiated language and involve a high level of duplication and overlap of issues and proposed actions. This makes it very difficult to either explain the proposals to stakeholders, who have not been closely involved with the IPF/IFF processes, or to seek national consensus on the relevance and priorities for implementation of individual proposals. As a result, Australia decided to summarise the suite of proposals with the aim of improving the understanding of the IPF/IFF proposals for action by simplifying the wording and grouping related proposals.

##### *1. Summarising the IPF proposals for action*

In 1998, Mr Tony Bartlett initiated and prepared an initial summary of the IPF proposals for action. He undertook this task primarily because he had been closely involved in, and had a comprehensive knowledge of, the international forest process and the work that was done to negotiate the IPF proposals for action. The draft summary was circulated to, and endorsed by, relevant Commonwealth and State agencies.

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<sup>3</sup> The "Six Country Initiative" on **"Putting the IPF Proposals for Action into Practice at the National Level"**, was convened in 1998 in support of Programme Element I.a. of the programme of work of the IFF. It was sponsored by the Governments of Finland, Germany, Honduras, Indonesia, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in co-operation with the IFF Secretariat, UNDP and FAO.

The initial summary of the IPF proposals for action was well received by the international forest community and was subsequently incorporated into the IPF Practitioners Guide prepared as part of the “Six Country Initiative”.

## *2. Summarising the IFF proposals for action*

In early 2000, building on the summary of the IPF proposals for action, Mr Bartlett in collaboration with a small Commonwealth/State/Territory Steering Committee, extended the initial work by preparing a consolidated summary of the IPF and IFF proposals for action. The Commonwealth/State/Territory Steering Committee comprised members who, similar to Mr Bartlett, had been closely involved in, and had a comprehensive knowledge of, the international forest process from 1995-2000. A draft of the consolidated summary was circulated to relevant Commonwealth and State agencies for endorsement.

In November 2000, Mr Bartlett presented the final consolidated summary at the “Eight Country Initiative – Shaping the Program of Work for the United Nations Forum on Forests”. The consolidated summary was commended as providing a concise and understandable list of key actions that needed to be implemented by countries and international organisations.

In the near future, Australia intends to regroup the summarised proposals for action to align with the 16 elements supported at UNFF 1.

## **Assessing Australia’s performance in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action**

### *Overview*

Using the consolidated summary, a national level assessment was undertaken of Australia’s progress in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The assessment was geared to determining broad national progress rather than State/Territory or local progress. Section 5 of the assessment report does however provide some general commentary on specific initiatives at sub-national levels.

Australia recognises that the IPF/IFF proposals for action are a ‘means to an end’. That is, they are a guide towards management for the conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

Australia’s assessment focused on national priorities. It considered those issues regulated through international instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought.

### *Six Country Initiative*

The assessment process used in the ‘six country initiative’ was a valuable initial experience in devising a possible common approach, while avoiding the imposition of a prescriptive methodology. The participants emphasised the systematic methodology and tools developed in the six-country exercise could be used as a guide by other countries in devising their own approaches to the assessment of the proposals. The main gap in applying the methodology was the inadequate attention given to evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation, and instead simply recording whether or not the proposals were covered by national frameworks.

One of the key problems was a lack of clarity in many of the proposals, especially as to their meaning in the national context. In part, this is due to the nature of the negotiated text. To facilitate national-level assessment processes, the language of the proposals was clarified and a considerable effort was made to raise awareness of their meaning and importance. The Practitioners' Guide helped clarify some aspects but a more comprehensive review was considered necessary. Many participants considered this to be a key element in the strategy to achieve broad stakeholder participation in the assessment process. Another key problem that was addressed was the fragmented nature and overlaps of the proposals.

Australia undertook a preliminary systematic assessment of the proposals using a slightly different methodology from that of the Initiative. The methodology identified the relevance and priority of the proposals to the country, at national and international levels, and responsibilities for and implementation status of each proposal. This assessment helped to raise awareness of the proposals at the sub-national level and identify potential gaps in the existing programs.

#### *Australia's Assessment Activity*

- The assessment process had three components:
  - a review of the relevance of each of the summarised proposals for action in the Australian context;
  - an appraisal of the level of priority attributed to each of the summarised proposals for action by Australia; and
  - an evaluation of the implementation progress at the national level of each of the summarised proposals for action.
- The summarised proposals for action were placed into two categories:
  - those targeted for implementation within Australia; and
  - those targeted for implementation as part of Australia's international programs and activities.

The relevance of the proposals were assessed against:

- existing national frameworks, policies, priorities and programs in the forest and forest-related sectors;
- existing situation within the forest sector;
- urgent national problems within or beyond the forest sector;
- feasibility and potential impact on SFM; and
- other international commitments relevant to the forest sector.

Priority of implementation scores were attributed to individual proposals for action on the basis of:

1. the level of impact on sustainable forest management;
2. the resources and time required to implement them; and
3. the importance to stakeholders of individual proposals for action.

In determining progress, the term “implementation” of proposals used in the IFF Program of Work was interpreted to mean:

- (i) the assessment of the proposals against the existing national forest-related frameworks in terms of relevance and value according to national priorities, constraints and ongoing activities as well as regional and international obligations;
- (ii) the integration and internalisation of the proposals into existing national processes (e.g. national forest programs and related instruments in other sectors); and
- (iii) identification of country-specific actions.

This approach ensured that the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action were considered as integral parts of relevant national processes (e.g. national forest programs) rather than thinly related additional parallel activities.

#### *Step 1:*

A Commonwealth-State working group was formed to coordinate the assessment process. This ensured that all relevant government-level forest management stakeholders were represented in the process. As indicated below, broader non-government organisation (NGO) stakeholders were involved in later stages of the process.

**TABLE 1:** Membership of Commonwealth-State working group

<p><u>Commonwealth Government Members:</u>  Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia (AFFA)  Department of Environment and Heritage  Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  AusAID</p> <p><u>State Government Members:</u>  Standing Committee on Forestry (representing State and Territory forest management agencies)  National Parks and Wildlife Service (New South Wales)</p> <p><u>Other Agencies:</u>  Australian Centre For International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)</p>
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#### *Step 2:*

Through discussions and documented research, the working group undertook an initial assessment of Australia’s performance in relation to the proposals for action targeted for implementation within Australia’s international programs. As described earlier, the three components of relevance, priority and progress with implementation provided the base for this work. It is important to note the working group’s members had extensive involvement in the IPF/IFF processes since 1995.

#### *Step 3:*

The working group commissioned a consultant to prepare a first draft of the assessment of the nationally targeted proposals for action, based on the contents of the summary booklet. The consultant worked closely with key members of the working group to further refine the assessment of Australia’s performance on the nationally targeted proposals for action.

The consultant was selected on the basis of extensive knowledge of the Australian forestry context and was familiar with the work of the IPF and IFF. The consultant had been a senior official in a forest management agency and had an extensive network of contacts throughout the country.

In the main, the consultant relied on his extensive personal knowledge of the Australian forestry context to undertake the assessment, particularly on Codes of Forest Practice, State and Territory legislation and associated regulations. With this knowledge and through extensive discussions with State and Territory agencies the consultant was able to bring together the necessary information to finalise the assessment.

To guide the consultant, the working group drew up clear and explicit terms of reference and developed an assessment-ranking template that included a four point priority ranking and a five-point progress-with-implementation index (See TABLE 2).

**TABLE 2:** Assessment-ranking template including a four-point priority ranking and a five-point implementation progress index

Priority for implementation	Progress with implementation
NR=Not relevant L=Low M=Medium H=High	0=Not started 1=Program commenced 2=Program well under way 3=Substantial progress 4=Substantially completed

The working group, with the consultant, allocated to the various summarised proposals for action, both nationally and internationally targeted, a priority for implementation score of high, medium, low or not relevant.

#### *Implementation within Australia*

The following table (TABLE 3) provides a summary of the logic behind allocating a priority of implementation score of high, medium, low or not relevant to the various proposals for action targeted for implementation within Australia.

**TABLE 3:** Implementation within Australia

Priority of implementation	Impact on SFM	Resources and time required to implement	Importance to Stakeholder	Examples
High	very major impact	very significant	high importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation of a national forest programs</li> <li>• enhancing the role of plantations</li> </ul>
Medium	substantial impact	considerable	some importance to individual stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthening forest research programs</li> <li>• assessing adequacy of protected areas</li> </ul>
Low	some impact	limited	minor importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• technologies for lesser-known species</li> <li>• improving market access</li> </ul>
Not relevant	not relevant in country context		not considered necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low forest cover countries</li> <li>• actions to reduce long range air pollution</li> </ul>

### *Implementation within Australia's international programs*

The rankings for the international component were based on Australia's capacity to contribute and ability to influence rather than their overall global significance.

The following table (TABLE 4) provides a summary of the logic behind allocating a priority of implementation score of high, medium, low or not relevant to the various proposals for action targeted for implementation within Australia's international forest programs. Priority of implementation scores were allocated to individual proposals for action according to the current and anticipated level of focus and resources that would be given to them in Australia's international forest programs and activities.

**TABLE 4:** Implementation within Australia's international programs

<b>Priority of implementation</b>	<b>Level of focus and resources</b>	<b>Examples</b>
High	action will be given the most focus and resources in Australia's international forest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assisting countries develop and implement national forest programs, codes of practice</li><li>• supporting the work of international and regional forest related organisations</li></ul>
Medium	action will be given some focus and resources in Australia's international forest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the identification of research needs,</li><li>• supporting assessment and implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action</li></ul>
Low	action will be given limited focus and resources as part of Australia's international forest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assisting networks to promote traditional forest related knowledge (TFRK)</li><li>• assisting countries establish plantations</li></ul>
Not relevant	actions were not a priority by Australia for the allocation of resources as part of our international forest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• monitoring trans-boundary air pollution</li><li>• analysing the costs and benefits of non-wood substitutes</li></ul>

#### *Step 4:*

The working group then considered the consultant's draft and circulated it to a limited number of stakeholders for comment, including Australia's overseas aid delivery agency and academic experts.

#### *Step 5:*

Once comments were received from the limited stakeholder group and incorporated where appropriate, the draft international and national components were pulled together and the consolidated draft assessment was circulated to State and Territory forest management agencies for whole-of-government comment.

**TABLE 5:** State Agencies to which the draft national assessment was circulated

Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Forests Conservation and Land Management – Western Australia Department of Natural Resources – Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Environment – Victoria Forestry South Australia Forestry Tasmania Department of the Environment – South Australia Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory State Forests of New South Wales
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### *Step 6:*

Once comments were received and addressed in the consolidated draft, the national assessment was circulated to a wider group of NGO stakeholders for comment. The NGO response was limited, possibly because they were suffering from ‘consultation fatigue’ due to the six year Regional Forest Agreement process recently concluded where broad stakeholder consultation was extensive, or because stakeholders were satisfied with the Government’s handling of the IPF/IFF issue.

### *Step 7:*

The draft was finalised and endorsed by governments, and the final assessment report was introduced and made available at UNFF 1 in June 2001.

**TABLE 6:** Community and Industry Stakeholders to which the draft national assessment was circulated for comment

<u>Indigenous:</u> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC)
<u>Union:</u> Construction, Forestry, Mining & Energy Union (CFMEU)
<u>Research Organisations:</u> Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
<u>Academia:</u> Department of Forestry – Australian National University School of Forestry – University of Melbourne
<u>Industry Associations:</u> National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) Pulp and Paper Manufacturers Federation of Australia (PPMFA)
<u>Professional Organisations:</u> The Institute of Foresters Australia
<u>Environmental NGOs:</u> The Wilderness Society WWF – Australia Pacific Bioweb Native Forest Network

The assessment indicated that a majority of the IPF/IFF proposals for action have already been substantially or completely implemented in Australia. However, the assessment identified a number of high priority national actions on which progress has been slow. Australia is considering how it can address these in future work and link them to relevant national policies. This work will possibly form part of an Australian national plan of action.

The assessment also highlighted a number of high priority internationally targeted actions where implementation has not yet begun. Australia is committed to addressing these matters. Our co-sponsorship of two regional workshops to assist Asia-Pacific countries to implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action is the first step in meeting the commitment.

### **Key Lessons**

The most relevant lessons arise from the national assessment process that was followed to allocate individual proposals for action with a priority rating and an implementation progress score.

### *1. Identification of specific actions*

The assessment of national progress in implementing the proposals for action identified the need for specific actions, within the context of Australia's national forest program. It is important that these actions are consistent with national priorities and address key issues and major constraints, taking into account international and regional obligations.

### *2. Identification of those responsible for implementation of particular proposals*

By assessing the relevance, priority and implementation status of the proposals, at the national and international levels, we were able to clearly identify those agencies with key responsibility for implementing specific proposals for action.

### *3. Improving the understanding of forest decision makers of the importance of the proposals for action*

In Australia, we found that because of the 'high-level' nature of the proposals for actions, State, Territory and local agencies often did not see them as relevant to their day-to-day management operations. The assessment process was an effective means to assist State, Territory and local agencies and decision makers better understand the relevance and importance of the proposals for action. This assessment helped raise awareness of the proposals at the sub-national level and helped identify potential gaps in the existing programs.

### *4. Communication within and across Governments*

It became clear from undertaking the national assessment exercise that effective communication within and across Governments was crucial. In addition to the culture of open communication at departmental officer level, Australia has in place a range of high-level mechanisms to facilitate communication between Governments, including Ministerial Councils and standing committees comprising the heads of forest management and conservation agencies. These have been key elements in facilitating information sharing and developing a comprehensive and integrated national response to forest management issues, including the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

### *5. Stakeholder involvement and communication*

Australia enabled all relevant stakeholders to comment on the national assessment report. Participation of all relevant stakeholders was considered important. However, some stakeholder groups did not take an active role in the process. Their lack of involvement served to identify some key deficiencies in our consultation process about how we share information and seek input from stakeholders. Australia is addressing these deficiencies through the development of an improved stakeholder communication strategy.

### *6. Ideally those undertaking the assessment exercise should be familiar with the history and context of the IPF/IFF processes*

Having undertaken a national assessment, a key lesson that emerged was the necessity for those undertaking the assessment to be familiar with the history and context of the IPF/IFF processes, preferably from inception in 1995.

*7. Clear and explicit terms of reference for the assessment task*

From the Australian experience, it is apparent that developing and applying clear and explicit terms of reference for those undertaking the assessment is important.

*8. Development of an assessment process that is attuned to specific country circumstances*

While Australia has successfully completed a national assessment against the IPF/IFF proposals for action, it is clear that, if countries are to conduct a similar national exercise, they will need to develop an assessment process that is attuned to specific country circumstances. While countries can learn from the Australia experience, we do not advocate it as the model for all countries to adopt. Rather, it should be viewed as a template for countries to adapt to their specific circumstances.